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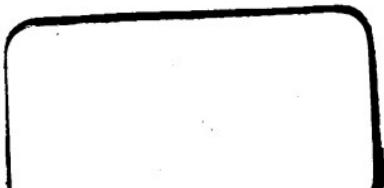
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THINGS
TO BE THOUGHT OF



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THINGS TO BE THOUGHT OF.

ADDRESSED TO THE YOUNG.

BY THE AUTHORESS OF "LITTLE THINGS."

"I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies."
—*Psalm cxix. 59.*

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"The human being should, as early as possible, have fixed within him a notion of what he is in existence for,—of what the life before him is for. It ought to be among the chief of the things which he early becomes aware of, that the course of activity he is beginning should have a leading principle of direction, some predominant aim, a general and comprehensive purpose, paramount to the divers particular objects he may pursue." — *Foster's Essay on Popular Ignorance.*

"Consider thy failings, heed thy propensities, search out thy latent [virtues.
"Analyze the doubtful, cultivate the good, and crush the head of [evil."
Tupper.



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P R E F A C E.

IT is hoped that the following humble and imperfect endeavour to be useful to the young, may be so, by suggesting some subjects of serious thought, rather than by any pretension to being a complete arrangement of "things to be thought of."

The trite and commonplace nature of the work is acknowledged; but encouragement has been taken from a remark in "The Claims of Labour," that "Duty is done upon truisms;" and it is hoped, therefore, that these faults will be overlooked, and the sincere intention and desire of doing even a little good, be accepted as an excuse.

INTRODUCTION.

IN addressing myself to those young people, who, having left school and the school-room, are henceforth in some degree to be their own mistresses, my object is to awaken in them the feeling that their education is not finished, nay, that it is but about to begin, and that the next few years of their lives are to them of the most vital importance. It is not of education, as comprised in lessons and school-room duties alone that I speak, although neither is that finished; but I would use the word in that higher and nobler meaning, whereby it signifies our training for all our duties here, and for our immortal life hereafter. In this sense, everything is education, if we use it aright; not merely our studies or pursuits, but all that befalls us in the providence of God, all that passes around us; above all, the workings of our own minds may and should be diligently and thoughtfully made use of, for the purpose of improving our characters, our habits, our inward progress in all that will enable us to "glorify God" on earth by a useful and happy life, and to "enjoy Him in heaven." Does it seem strange to any one to hear this self-education (if I may call it

so) spoken of as a means to such a great and glorious end as our eternal felicity? Is it feared that, by so representing it, we may seem to be advocating the doctrine of salvation by works, and overlooking, or in any degree slighting, the only foundation of a sinner's hope, the full and free sacrifice of Himself offered up by our blessed Lord? God forbid! Would that my feeble pen could indeed convince any of the young to whom I address myself, that there is no safety, no true happiness for them, till they are enabled to build upon the sure foundation —till aroused to a sense of their guilt as sinners in the sight of a holy, heart-searching God, they flee to Christ, and find rest to their souls —till it is their daily prayer to be renewed in the spirit of their minds, and their daily experience that the Holy Spirit is indeed working in them to will and to do God's blessed will. But while I do deeply feel that this change of heart must be produced by the Spirit of God, convincing us of sin, and leading us by faith to rely for pardon *alone* on the finished work of Christ, as he is offered to us in the Gospel; yet I would not forget that God works by means, and that he can bless the humblest efforts to aid His cause, or advance His children's welfare; and in this spirit would I seek

to rouse if it were but one young person to serious thoughtfulness of her high destiny, or to help her forward in the path of progressive holiness and happiness, by a few humble but practical hints. My task would be far easier were I sure I was addressing one who has already "chosen the good part which shall never be taken from her." But I fear too many of my young friends have never seriously asked themselves the question, "Why was I sent into the world?" They are content to live for their own pleasure, and rather feel as if serious thought on any subject was unnecessary at their time of life, and that as care and anxiety will come some time, perhaps their best plan is to enjoy themselves now, and let the future take care of itself. You may perhaps feel that it is a gloomy thing to be religious—that, at least, you would rather not think of it as yet—that it involves a life of constant self-denial, and so meanwhile you will enjoy the pleasures natural to your time of life, and when older, it will be time enough to think of these things. Commonplace, indeed, and trite are all the usual advices and exhortations to such thoughtless ones, by whom the shortness and uncertainty of life, and the awful importance of eternity, are alike unheeded. They will not

believe that true happiness and true religion are the same, and that the service of God is perfect freedom, and debars his followers from no rational pleasure, from no pursuit that exalts and refines the mind. Yet they are not always satisfied that they are in the right, they do sometimes feel uneasy, there are times when conscience will be heard, and thoughts of mis-spent days, and sad neglect of the soul's best interests, will arise, too often, alas! to be put aside by renewed thoughtlessness and folly. But I would hope that some who may look into this little work may be, at least, *inquiring* what use they are of, or feeling that they are only standing idle in the market-place, "because no man hath hired them,"—and to such I would earnestly appeal, requesting them to consider their ways, and to resolve that whatever others do, *they will serve the Lord.*

It has been said that, after all, it does not much matter how children are trained, for there seems little difference in after-life,—those who have been neglected, or have not had the advantages of education, often making up by their own exertions, and being disciplined by circumstances, so as to excel, both in mental and moral culture, those who have been carefully brought up and anxiously watched over.

There is much truth, I fear, in the remark, as far as regards the *result*; but if the young people who have had the blessing and advantage of regular instruction and domestic discipline, do not turn out better than those who have been left to themselves, sure am I that it is their own fault, and that, did they but consider all the training they have got as but preliminary to the important work of self-training, they would find that their early enforced habits saved them from many a painful exercise of self-denial, and were a constant assistance on a path which must ever be more difficult to those who have still these habits to acquire when the time for the performance of essential duties has arrived.

Let none, however, despair because they have not enjoyed the benefit of early training. Let them remember that far the most important part of education is what we give ourselves, and that nothing in the way of self-improvement is denied to well-directed diligence and earnestness. Circumstances, and situations, and characters, vary so greatly, and the duties incumbent on us differ so much accordingly, that it is impossible for one human being to lay down rules for another; but if we have a sincere desire to know the will of God and what is our own duty, we need not fear that we shall be

left to go far astray. To those who are thus beginning life, as it were, on their own account, I would say, take a calm, considerate view of your position, your advantages or disadvantages,—seek to ascertain your duty as regards others, as well as yourself—your talents, your disposition; and let it be your earnest prayer and endeavour in all things, to approve yourself to God in the station to which He hath called you. You need not fear that in entering upon a life-long course of self-improvement, you will be acting a selfish part, and become egotistical and self-seeking by being so much occupied with your own heart and mind. We cannot improve ourselves *truly* without increasing, not only our capability of doing good to others and glorifying God, but our desires and endeavours to do so. It is no *true* self-improvement which begins and ends for *self* alone, not even if our search after knowledge be from the love of it in itself ; for though that is, no doubt, a higher motive and spring of action than self-aggrandisement, still it ought not to be our ultimate aim. This love of knowledge for its own sake may, I think, be looked on as a gift from God to sweeten the drudgery of acquiring learning; and as such it should be used as intended, and not substituted for the higher and truer motive

of a Christian course of self-improvement, viz. the obtaining the full use of all the powers and faculties He has given us, and the right employment of them all to His glory.

If asked what is the best or most hopeful mood of mind for carrying on this great work, I would say *earnestness*. You all know what it is to be thoroughly in earnest about something, and you all know how much more easy of accomplishment that something is, when you are so disposed. For the concerns of the soul, it is indeed of vital importance, being spoken of in Scripture under the terms, upright, sincere, perfect. It is opposed to all formality, sloth, or trifling,—those besetting sins that too often eat out the life of our prayers and praises, our confessions of sin, and purposes of amendment. Above all, my young friends, let religion be a thorough work, and let earnestness characterise all your efforts,—remembering the Apostle's exhortation, "It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing."

This earnestness is also opposed to doing things by fits and starts as it were, which makes the religion of too many so fluctuating, so unlike the Scriptural description of a shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. But though of infinite importance to our

progress in religion, indeed essential to our being religious at all, this earnestness will be found to be necessary in all we undertake, if we would avoid the habit of trifling, or the danger of being superficial. Whatever is worth doing at all, is worth doing well, is a maxim which must be regarded in two ways: first, be sure that what you are about *is* worth doing, and then take care to do it earnestly, however slight it may be. The exquisite and perfect finish of the smallest work of God, may seem to show us, that what He designs to do, cannot be beneath the notice and imitation (feeble though it be) of His creatures. We have also an illustration of this principle in works of love. We would fain give of our best, whether in substance or labour, to those we love; we do everything for them "as well as we can;" and surely if we could achieve the attainment of doing *all* to the glory of God, we would not willingly offer to Him that which cost us nought, but would rather be willing "up to our power, yea, and beyond our power," to make all we do perfect.

There is a plan which may be generally found available in our endeavours to do earnestly whatever we are about, and it is to task ourselves, as it were, to fix times for what we have to do, as well as the things to be done in those times.

Who has not felt the listlessness of taking up work that may be done at any time, or a book that one does not require to finish?—and who has not experienced the wandering of mind, so apt to follow, as we fancy we should be doing something else, or desire we had something else to do? There is so much of woman's work that comes under this head, so much done either to pass the time, or for the mere sake of doing something, that some such self-imposed law of doing things at a fixed period, and forcing oneself occasionally to do what we are not inclined to, just because we have fixed to do it, is necessary to give a stimulus to the mind, and really makes our most trifling occupations more profitable than they can be in themselves, because we are acquiring, by this means, a little steadiness of purpose and resolution.

How often is the excuse made to ourselves, “I am not in the humour to do so and so;” or how often does the cowardly thought arise, “After all, I am not obliged to finish this,” till inclination being thus idly indulged, all habits of application and earnestness of purpose are lost. The counsel Dr Chalmers gave to his students, to follow Dr Johnson's advice as to composition, may be usefully attended to in many minor matters: “There is much of weighty and most

applicable wisdom in the reply given by Dr Johnson to a question put to him by his biographer, relative to the business of composition. He asked whether, ere one begin, he should wait for the favourable moment, for the *afflatus*, which is deemed by many to constitute the whole peculiarity of genius; ‘ No, Sir, he should sit down doggedly,’ was the deliverance of that great moralist. And, be assured, that there is much of substantial, and much of importantly practical truth in it. Whether it be composition, or any other exercise of scholarship, I would have you all to sit down doggedly; for if once you bethink yourself of waiting for the *afflatus*, the risk is that the *afflatus* never may come.” Substitute “waiting till we are in the humour” for the more high sounding “*afflatus*,” and then we, too, may practise the above advice, and find it useful. Another use of this system of doing even self-imposed duties at fixed hours, is the prevention of much waste of time, odd half-hours being too often spent wondering what to do next; whereas a well-laid scheme would lead us from one employment to another without those idle intervals, and enable us to accomplish far more than by desultory efforts. Perhaps my young friends may feel that this is too like the school-life they have so recently

left, and that it takes away the feeling of liberty of action which certainly gives a zest to our occupations. But if we, while here on earth, are always to be labourers, why should we object to take the benefit of some of our school-day habits along with us ; and, besides, I speak of self-imposed rules, and this makes a great difference in our desire to keep them.

"In truth, the prison into which we doom
Ourselves, no prison is."

It is not meant that you are to tie yourself down so rigidly to set times of occupation, that nothing can be allowed to interrupt you. That can rarely be your duty, as many family and social calls and necessary interruptions must be allowed for, and, indeed, included in your plan. You must, therefore, use it only as a guide to keep yourself from idle, trifling ways, never as an excuse for refusing to take your share in all the home and social intercourse, and assistance to others, that is your duty. I have heard of at least one tiresome individual, who was so tied to her own rules, that her family and her friends got little benefit from her society, *unless* it was sought for exactly at the time she had fixed for social intercourse. If you called and wished to spend an hour with her, she was obliged to leave you because the time for her

daily exercise had come. Did you meet her out of doors, and wish her to prolong her walk because the day was fine, or because you had not met for long, no persuasion would induce her to stay one minute beyond the appointed hour for exercise. So rigid was she in thus sacrificing everything to her own rules, that one of her friends used to declare that she was sure she fixed and kept to a certain number of mouthfuls of bread and sips of wine, when she partook of any refreshment of the kind. No such rigid and selfish adherence to rules would I recommend to the young, for though I do say that you should keep up as much as possible your school habits of regular employment, and strive to be daily adding something to what you already know and can perform; yet your system must now embrace others as well as yourselves, and your first duty is to study how best you may fill the station in which God has placed you. This will not prevent your having abundant leisure for your own pursuits, for it may be observed that it is not only the best humoured, but the most industrious member of a family, that has time to attend to all the rest, and to whom, indeed, all the rest somehow get a habit of appealing for help. The idle have no time to spare. Be sure then in any scheme of steady occupation you

lay down, to include in it largely the claims others have upon you, not merely the sick and poor, but your own family,—not merely your parents, but your brothers and sisters. It is but too common to see in large families the daughters devoted to nothing but themselves;—it matters little whether it be to their own gratification in rational pursuits, or to their own amusement; for if, in either case, the welfare, the comfort, or even the enjoyment of others of the family is unheeded, can that young person feel that she is living to the glory of God, or doing her duty to those among whom He has placed her, that she might be “the helper of their joy,” as well as the useful friend? Oh! what a boundless import has this one word “usefulness.” Its effect may reach through all eternity,—and surely did we consider its extent, and realize that, by one means or another, the power of usefulness is a talent given to every one of us, we should tremble under the responsibility, and make it a matter of earnest prayer and constant effort to see where and how we can best employ it, and should grudge no time or labour that may increase so great a gift. The power of usefulness, like all God’s gifts, increases by exercise. Let us not despise the humblest and most mechanical offices in which

we may help others, while we remember that there is no mental acquirement so high, no enlargement of mind so extensive, but that we shall find it if we seek to do so, a means of greater usefulness. The unconscious influence we possess over others, even more than the direct, is a solemn thought, and one that should awaken us to watchfulness and diligence, for under this view none can be called *useless*. If not positively *useful* they are *hurtful*. Let all your acquirements and efforts at self-improvement tend mainly to this great end of making you more useful in your day and generation, whether it be by advice, assistance, or example; and remember that as you cannot be very useful unless you are loved, it is a duty to adorn your usefulness with all the graces of the Spirit, "love, joy, peace, &c." Take care, however, not to forget, that while these higher exercises of the power of usefulness are the most important, the more quietly and unobtrusively you exercise them the better; and remember to make use of your humbler powers in the same way. Be daily doing something for others,—at home especially. Let your desire to be useful show itself in the kindly consideration of their smallest concerns, but be yourself as far as possible content thus to serve others, without parade or unnecessary bustle.

THINGS TO BE THOUGHT OF.

What do you Live for?

"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"—*Acts ix. 6.*

THE question that we would thus press upon the young is a wide, as well as an important one, for it includes all we have to do on earth, whether as connected with this world's duties, or with the all-important question of our preparation for eternity. The earnest seeking after the salvation, or progressive holiness of our souls, is clearly the chief work we have to do, a work leading to the great end of "glorifying God, and enjoying him for ever." There is no condition or circumstances that we can plead as an excuse for neglecting this great work, for the command is imperative on all, "Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness;" and the Saviour's promise of acceptance is alike

universal, "He that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." It is along with this first great duty, and as growing out of it, that we counsel the young to take a review of their circumstances, character, and capabilities, so as to endeavour to ascertain in what way they may best do His will in all things. We all know and acknowledge that we are not sent into this world to live for ourselves, for our own interests or amusements only,—yet how many do so ; and even of those who have from choice or circumstances been led to follow a more useful path how few have first asked, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ?" If we have been brought to feel that we "are not our own, but are bought with a price," surely this reference of ourselves to the will of God will seem our most reasonable proceeding, and if we have a sincere desire to know and to do that will, we need not fear that we shall be allowed to go astray. To those who are thus beginning life I would say, Take a calm, considerate view of your position, your advantages and disadvantages, your talents, your disposition, the station in life to which God hath called you, and try if you cannot, by those providential arrangements, ascertain in some measure what God requires of you. Next to

making an inquiry of this sort in the sincere spirit of wishing to know God's will, it is of importance that you should consider it as regards *yourself*. The question implies this also, "Lord what will thou have *me* to do?" The field is wide enough for all to work in, but it is surely neither necessary nor possible that all should do the same work. Sometimes it happens that young people, in their zeal to do good, are eager to engage in schemes of visiting or teaching, because they see others thus engaged, without considering whether their calling may not be different, or their gifts lie in another line; and finding that they do little good, or can only attend to these self-imposed duties by neglecting others which they know to be incumbent on them, they grow discouraged, and are apt to fall back. It is not, indeed, always easy to ascertain what we are fit for: some by their zeal, or self-confidence, being led to attempt too much; while others, from diffidence, or it may be indolence, decline all but the simplest and most obvious duties. The rule that we generally do well what we like to do, will not hold here; for useful exertion generally implies resolute self-denial, and there are times when neither the most zealous, nor the best fitted

for the work, will like it. There *may* also, sometimes, be a risk of our mistaking our calling by using the converse of the above rule—by supposing that if we are doing what we dislike to do, we must be doing what is right. There is, perhaps, no great fear of too many people being led astray by an excess of self-denial; for ten that will find out that what is disagreeable to do *cannot* be their duty, one, perhaps, may feel and act as if the dislike to the duty made it *therefore* right for them to do it. Now if in thus endeavouring to find out what good you can do, you do conscientiously feel that it is not from indolence or self-indulgence that you dislike the work you have begun, I would say that you have less chance of being useful in it than some others may, who having more natural capacity for it, take to it more kindly. In the matter of teaching in a Sunday-school this may be often seen exemplified; for though an earnest desire to do good, and practice and preparation go far in making a good teacher, still these are not enough. There must be, I think, some natural capacity for the work, a power of being interesting to, and understood by children, that every one does not possess. District visiting, too, requires more judgment

and good sense than are always bestowed upon it, though I cannot think that in this department of female duty, there is often to be met with that want of tenderness and sympathy with the poor which it has become the fashion to hold up as the characteristic of lady visitors. But besides these departments requiring more tact and experience than is usually found in the young, there are many to whom they are debarred, either from their position, or from the wish of their parents, or from their other duties. To such, and indeed to all, who wish to begin to live for some good purpose, I would say, Take up the duty that lies nearest to you, however humble it may be; do not let your desires to do much good prevent your doing a little when it is in your power, as the very training you will get by these daily endeavours will fit and prepare you for more extended operations, should God see fit to call you to them.

For this review of your fitness and opportunities for doing the will of God, you must take into account your condition of life as regards your self-improvement. Too many young people seem to think that when done with school, they have done with all they learned there, forgetting that all they have already acquired is but

as it were the framework for a building yet to be begun, and which, day by day, their efforts and energies are to be employed in finishing. If God has placed you in a station of life where no labour for your own maintenance, or that of others, is required, and where you have much leisure time, if you have received an education comprising accomplishments as well as more serious acquirements, it is clearly your duty not to lose the advantages thus bestowed upon you, but rather to cultivate whatever of the more elegant arts of life your talents lead you towards. Though inclination or disinclination be not a safe rule in *duty*, the choice may now be in some degree allowed you as to which of your acquired accomplishments you will continue most sedulously to practise. If you are gifted with musical powers, or a talent for drawing, your own inclinations will probably lead you to follow out those delightful arts; and assuredly for the sake of others, as well as for your own gratification, it is your duty to do so, and to resist the pleas of indolence or idleness which may make you fancy that you need not *now* practise either accomplishment with the diligence or perseverance you required to put forth in their acquisition. The very fact that you now

keep up and extend your acquirements and powers with comparatively little trouble, ought to make you feel it more incumbent on you not to lose them. It may seem unnecessary thus to urge those whose natural talent for music or drawing would seem rather more likely to need a warning not to let such fascinating occupations usurp too much of their time; but do we not too frequently see those thus gifted neglect the exercise or cultivation of their talent to such a degree, that to others who long for some share in their powers, it almost seems as if a counterbalance were given along with the talent, so as to nearly equalize those who have and those who have it not? Even to those who feel that they have no particular talent for music or drawing, I would say, do not throw aside what you have learnt, merely because others in the family may excel you, and you feel that your powers, or acquirements, are of little use, and may therefore be dropped or disregarded. This is often done, and frequently regretted afterwards, when what has been thus lost cannot be so easily regained, and when from altered circumstances even *your* music would have been acceptable, or your feeble artistic powers an amusement, at least to yourself.

I am aware that to those who have begun to ask themselves what they are living for, and on whose souls the overwhelming thought of eternity has for the first time begun to exercise its full power, such advice as the above may seem trifling; they feel the hours misspent that are not in a more direct manner devoted to God and the good of others; and lamenting that their hearts are too apt to be led aside from serious thought, they fear to occupy themselves, or allow an increased interest in any earthly pursuit. I think, however, that those conscientious scruples may be met by considering, that in recommending the young to keep up the accomplishments they have acquired, it is not meant that such a course should be the purpose of life. These accomplishments are only meant as adornments; and before throwing them aside, let the question be asked—what shall be substituted in their room?—for relaxation and amusement of some sort the human mind must have, and too often when debarred from innocent recreation it takes refuge in frivolous gossip, or the dullness of apathy. “Do not,” it has been said, “altogether abandon your pursuits, but regulate them, and use every acquirement for God’s glory; wage no war with things innocent, but pursue

them not till they become guilty." If cultivating accomplishments under restriction be a duty, it ceases to be so when these are made the chief work of life, and yet how frequently do we see young people who seem to have no other purpose but to pass their time agreeably, and whose hours are filled up, and their thoughts occupied by nothing but fancy work, music, and dress, to the exclusion, not only of serious thought, but of all rational and intellectual occupation. Let such ponder over the above advice, for while it is admitted that these things are innocent in themselves, and lawful and proper to be attended to, yet if pursued as the *only* occupation, they become guilty. I do not well know why, but fancy work seems to be less feared as an accomplishment by many who might think it wrong to spend hours on music or drawing. A young lady is generally considered industrious, if she is perpetually crocheting or knitting, or engaged in worsted work, or embroidery; while there can be no doubt that these are much less intellectual amusements than the fine arts, give less pleasure to others, and ought to occupy little of the time of those who can do better things. It is not now, however, considered so unfeminine as it once was, that a young

lady should both read and study for her own improvement; the silly accusation of being a blue-stocking need not now be apprehended, if a lady is found to prefer improving her mind to the mechanical exercise of her fingers; nor is it now believed to be a necessary consequence of the love of reading, that a woman will neglect her dress, despise domestic duties, and talk inconsiderately of books which she may not understand.

The cultivation of the mind and its various powers is clearly a *duty*, being one of the means put into our power by which we may glorify God, and do good to others; and besides these more active exercises of our powers, the negative advantages of a cultivated mind are neither few nor small. I mean by these the freedom from the love of petty gossip, the power of employing oneself, and the happy independence of outward sources of amusement, to say nothing of the growing power of the mind itself to gain new knowledge, and be interested in a greater variety of pursuits. One of the answers to the question we have taken as our motto may be —to cultivate, improve, and thus increase the mental powers bestowed on you.

One of the chief means of doing this is by

reading. Now, though there are few tastes so valuable as a love of reading, and few people to be so much pitied as those who have it not, yet, like all other enjoyments, it needs a guard, both as to the time devoted to it, and the books read. It is a sad abuse of this love to expend it all on light or merely amusing works: yet how often does the expression "a great reader," indicate nothing more than such a course. Those who pursue it become, at length, so vitiated and weakened in taste, that all steady reading is disliked, and amusement alone is sought for in what ought to be one of our principal means of mental improvement. I am not sure but that the most general idea of the desireableness of a love of reading consists in regarding it as a mere *amusement*, and perhaps it is from the prevalence of this mistaken view, that, to many people, the idea of industry is only suggested by *work*, of however useless a nature, while hours spent in reading are considered to be, at least, but an innocent and amusing manner of spending the time. I would advise every young person to get quit of this false notion, by making it a point of duty to read daily such works as will require careful attention, to *study* sometimes, and *read* at

others, and to consider no scheme of self-improvement complete unless it includes a little tougher work in this respect than they may always find *amusing*.

In recommending daily hours for steady reading, I would also advise some regular plan, both of study and of time, to be thus employed. Dr Chalmers' advice on this subject was, "The first essential to a pleasant and productive employment of your time is, the regular and systematic distribution of it. This does not supersede the relaxations of society, domestic concerns, light reading, and exercise out of doors. The truth is, that the zest of the last is greatly heightened by the previous tension and fatigue which you may have incurred throughout those parts of the day which are given to the more serious pursuits of instruction and self-improvement. Regulate your hours, then; for it were quite vain to offer any advice to those who will not relinquish the habit of living at random, and living as they list."

There can be no doubt that this true cultivation of the mind adds to our usefulness, and often does so in a way we little expected. Permanent influence over the minds of others is seldom acquired by any one of a frivolous and

empty mind. There is, generally, in such, a sameness and *common-placeness* that make their society wearisome after a time, while there is a freshness and intelligent interest in a cultivated mind that enable it to maintain its influence over others, and thereby to draw them towards what is good. "In all labour there is profit," says Solomon; and though you may not at first find any good in what you have learnt, beyond the strengthening of your own mind, you will, surely, at some time or other, find a use for all you have acquired. No one was ever heard to regret that he had learnt too much; but many a one does regret that opportunities of acquiring knowledge were allowed to pass unimproved, as "now" it would be useful or desirable. Therefore "get wisdom; and with all thy getting, get understanding."

It seems desirable, in some instances, rather to have a slighter knowledge of many subjects, than a deep and thorough knowledge of a few. I do not mean by this to advocate a young lady's getting a smattering of several subjects, so as to enable her to talk on them; nor do I mean to excuse the superficial, unpersevering spirit that leads too many to fly off to a new study or pursuit the moment they are

tired of what they are about. I mean rather, that we should cultivate a general and intelligent interest, and endeavour to acquire a little knowledge on many subjects, so as to have our minds awake, and ready to add to our store, should an opportunity offer, or should circumstances compel or induce us to turn our minds more in one direction than another. It is true, that without deep and devoted attention being given to one pursuit, no great or high excellence can be attained in it; but how seldom is it in the power or capacity of women to give this undivided attention; yet because she cannot, and ought not in general to give herself up to some one study or pursuit so as to make it her calling, is she therefore to yield her mind to trifles or mechanical handy-works? Let me not be misunderstood as despising or undervaluing the truly feminine occupation of needle-work. I would not consider any young lady as fully educated, who has not acquired both a taste and a capability for sewing, not merely ornamental work, but good old-fashioned plain *white seam*. Our needles are not only useful, but how often are they a resource that nothing else can supply. How many an odd, idle minute do they serve to occupy usefully; and when

in the many hours of recovery from illness, or watching by the sickbed of others, we cannot task our minds with even light reading, how happy a resource is needlework, either useful or ornamental, let those say who have experienced it. May it not be one cause why men in general bear long confinement worse than women, that they seldom have any resource for employing their *hands*, and that their *heads* are as incapable at these times as our own of any great exertion? Let us consider needlework, then, as among our *privileges*, and, certainly, if we excel in it, there are few accomplishments that can be turned to such good account, both as to variety of usefulness, and variety of amusement. It is a *womanly* accomplishment, and therefore we should cultivate it; for though it may be a false and unnecessary fear, that attention to mental cultivation unfits a woman for her proper duties, still we ought to dread all departure from feminine habits and employments, lest it lead, in any measure or degree, to that dreadful character, "*a manly woman.*" "*That is so like a woman,*" is too generally an expression of contempt; but while, by cultivating her reasoning powers, and acting in accordance with religious principle, a woman ought to seek to

free her character as much as may be from feminine (that is foolish) *weakness*, let her never forget that to be *womanly* is the highest praise that can be bestowed upon her, for then only is she fulfilling the high and noble destiny to which God has called her.

On Completeness of Character.

"And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity."

THIS exhortation is from the *general* epistle of St. Peter, and therefore we cannot set it aside as not addressed to us; and the study of it must lead us to see how important *completeness* of character is to a Christian. There is no doubt a great diversity of natural dispositions, as well as of mental characteristics, and each and all of us should seek to know ourselves in these respects, that we may employ what is good in us to God's glory, and watch against the evil which, unchecked, would but too soon and too easily "choke the good seed that it become unfruitful." But more than this is required of those who would "neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is a comparatively easy business, for instance, for the naturally gentle to bear provocation meekly, for the naturally warm and ardent spirit to be zealous in a good cause, for

the naturally quiet to be keepers at home, and to mind their own business, or for the naturally active and energetic to "spend and be spent" for Christ.

It is right it should be so; when these natural gifts are sanctified by the Spirit, and made meet for the Master's use, it is right that they should be dedicated to Him; it is right that each should bring an offering as the Lord hath blessed him; it is right that we should remember that all members have not the same office; but that "having gifts differing according to the grace given us," we should serve the Lord with what we have, neither envying those who are fitted for higher posts of usefulness, nor under-valuing those whom we may deem almost useless. But we should not stop here; the apostle Peter shows us "a more excellent way." We are required to *add* to our faith, virtue, and to virtue, knowledge, &c. We are not, as it were, merely to grow in one grace, to be eminent in one field of usefulness, or to rest satisfied with attaining to greater completeness in the exercise of any one gift: for as in the growth of the body, all the members must grow equally to make it a perfect body, and none must be awanting, nor any one exercised into full

vigour, while the others are left unused and stunted; so in the growth of the soul must all its faculties and powers receive due cultivation, if we would seek to attain to the "stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus." In studying the description given by St. Peter of the graces that must be added one to another to make us "neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ," we feel that if any one were observed to be totally wanting, or even very weak, we would be apt to judge unfavourably of the consistency, if not of the Christianity, of another. If, for instance, we knew any one who professed to have faith, but was evidently wanting in virtue; or whom we knew had much knowledge, but failed in godliness; or professing to love God whom he hath not seen, yet loved not his brother whom he hath seen, thus *not* adding to godliness, brotherly kindness, would we not feel a painful sense of incompleteness, a hesitancy even as to such a one having even the one grace in reality which he professed to have. Let us deal thus with ourselves; let us not only avoid picking and choosing, as it were, what grace we shall cultivate and practise, leaning, as we should then naturally do, to what is easiest and most natural to our dispositions; but

let us go on diligently to *add* to those natural gifts, all that is here required of Christ's followers. It is not meant by this that all should do the same work, that all will attain to the same perfection in any one particular,—the differences of natural disposition and of providential arrangement, will ever make this as unlikely as it is uncalled-for; but seeing that amidst all the endless *diversity* of God's works, the same *completeness* is manifest in each and all of them, so surely should we steadfastly strive after the like completion in the progressive sanctification of our own natures. This must be done, as it were, by a double work; for while the cultivation of all goodness is assiduously carried on, there must be an equally strenuous endeavour to eradicate whatever is evil. Each grace, each increasing degree of holiness, has its opposing sin to watch against, and vainly will we strive to attain to the one, if, at the same time, we do not resolutely, and with earnest prayer for grace to help, struggle to uproot the other. The graces of the Spirit must not be left to take their chance, we must never forget that they are like exotics planted in an uncongenial soil; and though we know that we are as entirely and completely dependent on God's Spirit for our

growth in grace as we are for the first renewing of our natures, and the implanting of these graces, yet here is the command, " Giving all diligence, add" to those graces, and while humbly obedient to that command, we shall be assisted and guided to its fulfilment.

It may seem unnecessary to remind any one that there is thus a double work to be done in cultivating our souls, that they may be as a well-watered garden, which the Lord hath blessed; but it is to be feared that we are sometimes apt to forget this; and while conscientiously striving by a diligent use of the means of grace to promote the sanctification of our nature, we are too apt to pull down with one hand what we build up with the other, from a want of watchfulness in striving against the opposing sin here alluded to. Do we not somehow feel as if our unbelief, or ungodliness, would yield easily and be subdued without an effort on our part, if only—

" In some favoured hour
At once He'd answer my request,
Add by His love's constraining power
Subdue my sins, and give me rest. "

But where would then be the warfare? where the good fight of faith? where the increasing sense of our own insufficiency and of the ful-

ness that is in Christ? These lessons are to be learnt when we find that our desired growth in grace cannot be obtained without a constant struggle to repress sin, as well as to cultivate holiness.

As there are natural dispositions inclining each to an easier performance of some part of their duty, so there are "easily besetting sins," which seem to follow those natural virtues like their shadows, and tend either to lead us into extremes, or so to act as to counterbalance all the good effects of the others. The quiet and gentle are often timid and indolent, the active and energetic, rash and irascible; prudence may degenerate into selfish faint-heartedness, and even charity become false liberality, as when we excuse what is in its essence wrong. All these errors, and many more which will readily occur to the thoughtful reader, are alike opposed to that completeness of character which ought to be the object of our earnest endeavours; and while we thus experience the difficulty of its attainment in our own case, will we not learn to judge others less harshly, and to wonder less at *their* inconsistency?

In thus, each for herself, taking account of easily besetting sins, we ought to include those

to which we are liable from age and station. The "sins and faults of youth" we may think will disappear of their own accord; and so, meanwhile, the young trouble not themselves, hoping, if they give the subject any consideration, that they will *grow out* of all these things, or that circumstances will change them. Alas! too often there are no fears in their hearts.

This want of thoughtfulness is in itself one of the commonest faults of youth, and the origin of many more; for to how many does the excuse seem a valid one, that "they never thought about it," and therefore they feel that they are free from blame. Did they but perceive how much their own improvement, mental and moral, suffers from this absence of thought; did they but realize how it interferes with the growth in grace which we have been urging, they would surely watch against it, and feel as if it should have been left far behind as belonging to childhood rather than to youth.

It is true that there must be an immaturity in what is good in the young, and that they must and do err often from inexperience, as well as from thoughtlessness; they are frequently led astray by their high spirits, till cheerfulness passes into levity and folly. But will added years

and experience cure all these things without their taking thought on the matter? I fear not,—for the truth of the proverb may be doubted that “*Experience teaches fools.*” Is it not rather the wise and the thoughtful who profit by her lessons, while “*the simple pass on and are punished.*” It is not easy, indeed, to see how we are to improve by merely growing older, without a thoughtful endeavour to learn the lesson each passing occurrence may teach us, or to lay up in our minds till they are needed, the principles of conduct that may be acquired from a wise observance of what is passing around us,—from our own mistakes, from the example of others, or from the written or spoken experience of those who are older and wiser than ourselves. How otherwise shall we add “*to virtue, knowledge;*” how otherwise avoid becoming as creatures moved by impulse alone, kind and amiable it may be, but, from want of *thoughtfulness*, in no way to be relied on as to action, or consulted with safety as to judgment. Does not a soul in this thoughtless state run the risk of the fault becoming habitual, and so resembling the hard and beaten wayside, where the good seed could find no root, and the fowls of the air quickly devoured it? This serious thoughtfulness and

consequent growth in grace must indeed be the work of the Holy Spirit in us; but are we not commanded to be fellow-workers together with Him? While, then, we seek his aid, and all-sufficient grace, let us remember that the effect of these will be to excite and enable us to make efforts, not to supersede them.

A trifling, frivolous youth will grow into a trifling and frivolous age, even though the objects of its frivolity may be changed; and it is to be feared that even when the heart has been renewed, and the bent of the mind is towards eternal things, the hurtful effects of such a disposition will continue to be felt and seen. Everything that can enlarge and strengthen the mind should, therefore, be allowed a place in the studies and pursuits of the young. Let them not too curiously enquire of what use will learning this, or knowing that, be unto them; but try rather to keep what has been acquired till it be of use, —remembering that the indirect benefit received is sometimes of as much value as any more palpable one can be. An uncultivated woman is apt, not merely to be narrow-minded and bigotted, but to become that most offensive of all characters—a religious gossip. Surely if there were no other recommendation to a cul-

tivated *taste*, this would be one, that it often prevents, and is offended by, those gossiping ways and words, that religious principle alone does not always effectually put a stop to. Labour, then, for completeness of character in every spiritual grace, and in every mental gift. Let the latter help and enhance the former ; but let not your labour in either respect be self-seeking. Be not as Israel of old, when condemned as “an empty vine, for he bringeth forth fruit to himself ;” but bringing “all your gifts into God’s storehouse, prove Him now herewith, if He will not pour you out a blessing till there shall not be room to receive it.”

Another advantage to be gained by completeness of character, or even by striving after it, is a true admiration of, and value for the gifts of others. The one-sided are not only prejudiced, but they really seem as unable to see, as they are unwilling to admit, the beauty and exemplary nature of those graces in others which are wanting in themselves; whereas those, who from experience have felt the difficulty of attainment, or those who, by reason of their having attained, are able to appreciate excellence, can, and do admire the good that is in

others. If it is true "that no man can be really appreciated but by his equal or superior;" and if it is also true that "there is nothing by which the mind is more impoverished than by a habit of undue depreciation," it must follow as a matter of course, that a want of that hearty and sincere appreciation of the gifts and graces of others, must result from our own inferiority, and must often hinder our own spiritual and mental progress. Fulness of mind gives a readiness in resources which is most valuable, whether it be acquired for the benefit of others, or is used only for our own employment; and when the habit is once acquired of earnestly seeking to profit by every means, there can be few, if any, circumstances in which we can be placed, where this great work may not be carried on. To some, whose quiet and even tenor of life goes on unbroken, this may seem a small benefit; but to many, a ready power of adaptation to circumstances, is a most desirable habit, and one which is greatly increased and facilitated by that completeness of character we are inculcating, which, place it where you may, will ever find materials whereon to work, because it has within itself materials to work with.

It will not, as we said before, and never can, be the effect of this spirit of progress to make all alike, either in development or sphere of duty. The spirit must be the same, the aim the same; but as our circumstances, dispositions, and duties vary, so will our experience our trials, and temptations differ: but while we are thus going on in the same path, let us not be forgetful of that brotherly kindness and charity, which will lead us not only to admire excellence of any kind in others, but to practise forbearance, and to feel sorrow for, rather than bestow blame upon, their shortcomings. If the advantages, and consequent progress, of some are not our own, neither are the temptations which lead to the falling away of others; let us endeavour to help forward both; and while we willingly give place to, and seek to imitate the one, let us consider ourselves, lest we also be tempted, and be careful to put no stumbling block or cause of offence in our brother's way.

On Diligence.

"Diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."

EARNESTNESS in all we do has already been alluded to as a most desirable state of mind, and from it would follow, as the natural result, diligence in doing. As there is an acknowledged difference, however, between always saying something and always having something to say, so is there between always doing something and always having something to do. The constant frittering away of time, the useless industry, the "lethargic assiduity," of many who are yet always doing something, can hardly be called diligence. Yet as they are never idle, one cannot but help wishing that such busy idlers had actually something to do. From the frequent commendations of diligence in the Scriptures, and the many promises attached to it, we may gather, that the exercise of this quality extends to the higher concerns of the soul, no less than to the daily business of life. Much instruction may be gained from many verses of the Proverbs on this subject, for though many of them

refer in the first place to worldly diligence, there is a deeper spiritual meaning in them. "The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat," Prov. xiii. 4. This is certainly one of those, and from the contrast drawn in it and others, between the slothful and the diligent soul, we should take warning as well as encouragement, and may often be thus self-convicted of want of diligence. How apt are we to be satisfied with good desires, with wishing well; we seem to have almost an idea that this is enough, that the graces of the Spirit will flourish under this as under culture; and while thus desiring, how apt are we to forget that, all the time, we "have nothing." Oh, these lazy wishes, how they do rob us of the comfort, and strength, and growth in grace, that are here promised to the diligent soul! "Let," it has been said, "the same earnestness and solicitude, the same diligence and perseverance, with which some favourite worldly object is pursued, appear in our religious conduct, and in our devotion, and we shall soon find, that 'the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.'" Diligence in studying the Word of God, in prayer, and in attending the ordinances of re-

ligion, cannot be profitable, if not done with that earnestness of spirit which alone makes the difference between real diligence and heartless formality. The following counsel from the pen of Archbishop Leighton bears upon this point, and is so beautifully explanatory of what diligence in the concerns of our souls implies, that I cannot do better than extract it.

"For the entertaining and strengthening of spiritual life, which is the great business of all that have it : 1st, Beware of omitting or interrupting those spiritual means that do provide it and nourish it ; little neglects of that kind will draw on greater, and great neglects will make great abatements of vigour and liveliness. 2nd, Take heed of using holy things coldly and without affection ; that will make them fruitless, and our life will not be advantaged by them unless they are used in a lively way. 3rd, Be active in all good within thy reach ; as this is a sign of the spiritual life, so it is a helper and a friend to it. But wouldest thou grow upward in this life ? have much recourse to Jesus Christ thy head ; wouldest thou know more of God ? He it is that reveals the Father, and reveals Him as His Father, and in Him thy Father."

There is another branch of this spiritual di-

ligence that I would urge upon the young, and for that also I would refer to a text in Proverbs : "The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting: but the substance of a diligent man is precious." If asked what is implied by the common term, "a diligent use of the means of grace," would not the answer be : a regular attendance at the house of God is one of the chief of these means,—reading the Scriptures and religious works is another. But it is not to the means themselves, but to the diligent *use* of them, that I am now alluding; and is it not the case, that in spiritual things we too often resemble the slothful man who roasted not that which he took ?—for what else are we doing, when we hear and read, nay, are even keen and earnest, about these means of grace, and yet apply them not to our own souls, or let what has most impressed us at the time soon slip out from our remembrance ? It is no great proof of diligence, to love to hear the truth set forth in glowing and earnest terms, and to be roused and excited by thus hearing for a time. But, alas ! what becomes of all we hear or read—delightful though it be?—even as the excitement of the chase is unto the slothful man ! Do we not too often derive as little benefit from it, as he did

from that which, when found, was useless from the want of a continuous course of diligence? Let any one look back a year, and sum up all the opportunities of good, the Sabbath-days, the sermons, the books read, the trials and mercies, all, in short, of the means of grace he has enjoyed, both spiritual and providential; let him compare with these, the actual amount of benefit derived, and will not the result be a most humbling one?

To those who are earnestly striving thus to "give all diligence" to those higher and more important matters, I would say, carry the same spirit into all you have to do. Beware of a sauntering, listless way of setting about any work; looking more as if you had nothing else to do, and, therefore, were only doing that meantime, than if you were really at work. *Get done* with whatever you are about. The circumstances were very peculiar that justified Penelope in weaving her endless web; and there is nothing more opposed to diligence, than the system of dawdling for ever over some one thing that might have been completed long ago. Remember that activity is part of diligence.

Another great recommendation of this virtue is, that it really seems to add time to those who practise it. Burke says, "Thus much in favour

of activity and occupation, that the more one has to do, the more one is capable of doing, even beyond our direct task." Do not, however, mistake bustle for active diligence, nor undertake more than you can do without having to hurry over your work ; for in such a case you not only run the risk of doing everything in an unsatisfactory manner, so that it has to be done again, but you yourself suffer from the uneasy feeling of having left undone much that you had undertaken. Work *undertaken* but not *overtaken*, is oftentimes a heavy burden to a conscientious person, who perhaps has erred in overrating her powers of action ; and from thus being, as it were, obliged to hurry and get into a bustle, her diligence, praiseworthy though it be, fails to accomplish all that she desires. Quiet diligence does the most work ; and we certainly do sometimes meet with people who never seem to be doing anything—who have leisure to attend to many things, and to take an interest in what is going on around them—and who yet contrive to get through a great amount of labour. Both earnestness of spirit, and diligence in action, in worldly matters, need a guard, lest they induce the habit of being so engrossed by the one thing uppermost at the

time, that no interest is felt in any other. All other matters must yield to that one object; and it is well if the more serious consequence of neglect of other duties does not follow, as well as the lesser evil of being considered a bore in society, or an unsympathetic friend in private. In all schemes for the diligent use of time, there should be a large margin allowed for family and social demands upon us ; and that time ought not to be considered as lost that has been occupied in thus promoting the happiness, by entering into, and sympathising with, the daily joys and sorrows, of those among whom we dwell. The presence of young people in a house is generally considered to add to its cheerfulness, as well as to its activity : let my young friends consider it as a *duty* to be thus cheerful, and to make themselves generally useful ; and without yielding, on the one hand, to that mistaken diligence which is, in reality, only selfish devotion to the whim of the moment, avoid, on the other, all listless idleness or sluggish inactivity.

There are many hours in every one's life during which the claims of social intercourse occupy our time ; but now-a-days there is not the same stiffness and formality shown in visiting

that there was ; and it is seldom necessary to sit with the hands continually idle when thus engaged. Needle-work, and all kinds of ornamental or fancy work, may be then carried on, and it is wonderful how much may be done by diligent hands in those odd moments of time. Never to be without a piece of work to be taken up while chatting, is a good rule for those who have much time to spend in this way ; and in spite of what I have elsewhere said of the *superior* importance of intellectual pursuits to a constant employment of the hands *alone*, I do think that diligence with the needle is a most important duty for every female, if it did nothing else but enable her to fill up even the social hours with pleasant and profitable occupation.

To those who are diligent, there are few losses more grudged than that of their time, as it is only by method and regularity that they can get much done; so any interruption to this method often throws back several occupations which were waiting for their turn to be taken up, and one is apt to feel fretted at being thus interrupted, and of having, in consequence, still to look forward to work unfulfilled, and to burden to-morrow with the additional duties of to-day.

- If this interruption, however, is unavoidable, and not your own fault, beware of losing your temper as well as your time; endeavour cheerfully to take up what has been thus, as it were, brought to you, as you will generally find that your chosen work does not suffer in the end. It would be well, too, on these occasions, to take a lesson for our own conduct towards others especially in the matter of punctuality as to time. I believe as much time is daily lost by unpunctuality as is stolen by the proverbial thief, procrastination. If you feel chafed, and with reason, at being kept waiting after an appointed hour till you have to neglect some other call of duty, resolve that *you* will never so waste the time of another, or of many others; for it is seldom, indeed, that only one is a sufferer by having to wait for a habitual loiterer. Truly, time is one of the substances of a diligent man, which is precious.

In a certain degree, more can be accomplished by a diligent spirit who has, according to the common expression, "many irons in the fire," than when there is one absorbing object of pursuit. In general, the duties of women are of a miscellaneous nature, and it is seldom her calling to be devoted to one pursuit; but though

there may be, and perhaps ought always to be, some work in which a paramount interest is taken, (besides the one great duty of seeking the glory of God, our own salvation, and that of others,) this need not interfere with a diligent employment of the rest of our time. For this purpose a variety of occupation is desirable, and she, who *can* do so many things, is most likely to be the one who *does* the most. It is true that, with this facility of turning our thoughts and our hands from one thing to another, there is frequently combined the bad habit of beginning but never finishing—of taking up a pursuit only when fancy impels, and deserting it when some other novelty attracts us. This habit, so subversive of all true diligence, cannot be unknown to any one who yields to it. Let her just look into her work-table, and other repositories, and see how many unfinished things are there,—stockings half knit, trimmings half worked, articles of clothing half made, sketches unfinished, music begun to be copied, but either words or notes awanting,—and then let conscience say whether these are the results of a diligent hand. What is worth beginning is worth finishing, or it must be worthless indeed; and at all events, it is useless in an unfinished

state, and your labour and your time have been alike wasted. This habit, however, is so frequent, that I would recommend young people to have periodical times of reckoning with themselves, say once a month,—seek out all unfinished deeds, and allow yourselves no new occupations till these are completed, and deal resolutely with yourselves in this matter.

On Influence.

"Let us therefore follow after things wherewith one may edify another."—Rom. xiv. 49.

THERE is no subject upon which, perhaps, the young think less, nor one on which, from its importance, they ought to think more, than that of influence. Direct, or indirect, we all exercise it—we are all under it, and whether conscious or unconscious, we are ever bearing about with us, or open to, influences manifold and mighty for good or evil. The general idea many entertain of influence is, that it is the power of persuading another,—active influence is all they think of,—they see not, think not, perhaps believe not, in the mighty power of unconscious influence. If we were fully aware how much we are ourselves influenced by this unconscious power exercised over us by others, we surely would feel it a duty to watch that at least we do not injure others. We do not like, it may be, to admit that we are thus swayed, thus formed by anything of which we are unconscious. We would rather admit that

where we have not acted from our own sense of right and wrong, we were influenced by actual advice or instruction openly received from others. But the fact is undoubted, that there is such a power as unconscious influence exercised and received by us. Few young people think of it; very few are able to trace its effects when they do think of it; yet it should be made a subject of deep and solemn thought by all, for since capability of giving and receiving impressions is one of the conditions God has imposed on us, will He not demand an account of the use we have made of it? No one doubts that we are thus accountable for the *direct* influence we exercise on others; and too many try to shuffle off that responsibility by alleging that "they have no influence,"—they are too young, or too insignificant, or too ignorant, to possess such a thing,—and thus sometimes they succeed in blinding themselves to the guilt they are contracting, by indolently and from self-indulgent motives refusing to use one of the powers given us for good. Advice and entreaty *are* means of influence, no doubt, though it is not to them I principally refer; but it were well if young people considered more seriously their responsibility in this

respect among each other. Those who have felt the supreme importance of eternal things—who have been led by the Saviour into the narrow way that leadeth unto life, should surely do what they can to persuade others to go along with them. Is there no younger sister or friend, with whom you can thus plead? None of your own age who will be more likely to listen to you than to older advisers? It has been said, and truly said, “It seldom happens that we are very strongly influenced by those much older than ourselves. It is the senior of from two to ten years that most seduces and entralls us. He has the same pursuits, views, objects, pleasures, but more art and experience in them all.” The influence here alluded to seems to be merely worldly in its objects, but I quote the passage to prevent the objection being made, that young people can do little in the way of swaying their companions, for if their influence be thus powerful for evil, may it not be often so for good? At all events, it is worth trying, conscious, as all must be, that it is too often neglected more from apathy, indifference to the souls of others, and a want in ourselves of earnest, lively faith in the great truths we profess to be guided by, than

from having no one who may be induced, by our advice, to enter the ways of pleasantness and the paths of peace. "No man," says Southey, "was ever yet convinced of any momentous truth without feeling in himself the power, as well as the desire, of communicating it." And, surely, those truths which concern the salvation of our immortal souls are "momentous,"—and, if thus believed, will we not assiduously seek to impart them to others? Let your manner be gentle,—avoid every appearance of harsh dictation, or of self-sufficient superiority,—but show that you are in earnest by abstaining carefully from the slightest levity on sacred subjects (a fault which not a few fall into while setting aside all faithful warnings), and, in general, try entreaty rather than advice. The former is not so easily evaded, and more rarely gives offence.

After all, it is chiefly by example that we influence others; for I am not talking at present of *instruction*, the effect of which we generally refer to parents and teachers, but to that unconscious good or evil we give and receive from all that passes around us, especially from the actings of others. It may seem that to be always on the watch to exercise this power for good, and to abstain from its exercise for evil,

would produce a constraint of manner, a bondage, in fact, too heavy to be borne, and generate, likewise, a perpetual self-inspection which is anything but favourable to our mental or spiritual health. This is, undoubtedly, best promoted by looking out of ourselves to the cross of Christ, to His example and His revealed will, and ever remembering that, while "duties are ours, events are God's." The fact, however, that the influence of example is, in general, one which we exercise unconsciously, may prevent this fear, though it should also operate as an additional reason for careful *consistency* of conduct. We are not to do good merely that others may be led to follow our example; but neither are we to forget that, when we are perhaps least aware of it, our deeds and words may be helping or hindering an immortal soul on the way to life everlasting. The responsibility of this influence we cannot lay down, and are unable to get quit of. It attends our actions like their shadow, but we seldom see or know whom it has affected, or whether it has done so for weal or woe. Oh! let us, then, be careful how we walk, for light and transient as the impressions we make may seem, we know not which of them may remain to eternity. There are often

waverers, those who may have begun to think, but whose tendency towards what is right is so uncertain, that a look or a word may be sometimes enough to make them falter on their way, but who would take courage and go on if they met with a steadfast character, whose example would encourage and fortify them. If these undecided ones see you who profess to be guided by the highest motives, acting inconsistently with that profession—trifling your time—unwatchful of your words—eager after this world's wealth or pleasure—careless of the souls of others, and selfish or exacting—will they not hold themselves absolved from being much in earnest about what you thus seem to show you do not regard as of any great importance? Do not say as an excuse that you make no profession, and that therefore you are not answerable for the expectations others may form of you. If it be indeed the case that you make no profession, are you not greatly to blame in not doing so? Are you not thereby influencing others to be ashamed of confessing that they are the followers of Christ? and are you not in danger of incurring the awful doom denounced by Him against those who shall be ashamed of Him and of His words? The ex-

pression "making a profession" is too often misapplied to those who make a talkative or outward profession, and content themselves with mere lip-service; but the dread of making a profession often arises from cowardice. The fear of ridicule is as potent as the dread of dis honouring the holy cause—which is often the ostensible reason given for silence,—and the evil rests not upon our own souls alone, but upon those around us, who may become fatally infected by our faintheartedness. On the contrary, an honest avowal of our sentiments—a quiet but decided and consistent profession—does embolden and encourage, does influence and sway, those who are just beginning the Christian life; while it may not seldom be the means of leading such as are careless on the subject, to consider their ways. You must expect, it is true, frequently to meet with ridicule and opposition; but remember when tempted to be silent, when you should speak, or to comply, when you should stand firm, that you know not what "little one that believeth" on Christ you may be "offending," or what timid and doubting soul you may be encouraging and strengthening by the influence of your example, if you act consistently.

If we really felt it to be a fact, and a serious one, that we thus know not, and probably never will know, all the consequences for good or evil of our own actions, we would less frequently indulge ourselves in what is at best *doubtful*, under the plea of "just this once." That once may be the turning period in another's history who may see or know of us only "this once," and may never more lose the impression then made. She may know nothing of our habitual course of life; and however unfair we may regard it to be judged of by a single deed, or condemned for unknown results, yet as the influence thus exercised for evil would have been avoided had we not done what our conscience disapproved of that "once," are we not in some measure responsible for such unfaithfulness? While I would thus seek to impress the young with a sense of responsibility as to the influence they *cannot help* exerting over others, as well as in regard to more direct influence with respect to the things that concern their eternal peace, I would also wish them to remember that this silent effect follows them equally in all their *every-day* duties. Who has not felt the enlivening, the brightening influence of a day's contact with a cheerful mind? Our cares seem less,

our hopes brighter, our efforts more vigorous, our thoughts less desponding, than before ; and yet, though we may have met with sympathy, we have not received either advice or assistance to account for such a change. It is chiefly, if not entirely, the effect upon us of another's cheerful, hopeful heart. Who has not left the sick-room of some poor, patient, yet contented sufferer, humbled at the thought of how often we have fretted over trifles, mourned over slight ailments, or grumbled at very small inconveniences ? Ah ! let not thus even the sick and suffering say that they are laid aside from usefulness. They know not how often their Christian cheerfulness, their patient endurance, has humbled and yet encouraged the hearts of those who witnessed them. Their *influence* is a talent still left them to be used for God's glory. The reverse of all this takes place when we are thrown much into contact with gloomy, easily depressed, or discontented persons. They mean no evil ; but besides their own discomfort, they would do well to remember that they may unconsciously be damping the spirit and depressing the hearts of others, by yielding too much to these moods of mind. "A merry heart," says Solomon, "doeth good like a medicine;"

and as the young in general possess this as a prerogative of their years, let them use it to cheer the care-worn and disconsolate hearts of those whose burdens are heavier than their own.

Besides being careful what influence we exert, we must also guard against that which we ourselves receive, and for this purpose some study and knowledge of ourselves are requisite. There are some who are most apt to be influenced by companions—others by the books they read—many by the incidents daily occurring around them,—and as each class of causes may be productive of good or evil, we should watch well their effects upon ourselves. It is often scarcely possible for us to withdraw ourselves from society or circumstances, which yet we feel to be injurious to us; but if we are in the path of duty, in the sphere where God has placed us, we need “fear no evil.” A double portion of grace to help will be necessary, but it will assuredly be given, if earnestly sought for; and a more vigilant watch over our own hearts will be required when we feel conscious that there is an enemy within but too ready to open to the insidious influences from without. Let us beware, however, of placing ourselves in situations of temptation, and then hoping to be preserved from danger,

for there is no promise to those who thus "tempt the Lord." If we find that certain habits, certain society, certain books, exercise an evil influence over us, we ought certainly to lay them aside, even if by so doing we have to deny ourselves what is pleasant, and what to others may be harmless. Have my young friends never felt that some books, some circumstances, have made impressions on their minds that they cannot shake off, and that are never effaced? These impressions are influencing them, whether they think so or not. Unconsciously, it may be, they are thereby either roused to more activity, or betrayed into more thoughtlessness; and are thus led either to seek a nearer walk with God, or (fearful alternative) are hardened into cold indifference; and even when the causes have been forgotten, they may have left effects on their characters that will benefit or injure them *for ever*. "Take heed," then, "how ye hear." Take heed also what you read; and be not only earnest and diligent in seeking to secure good for your souls from whomsoever you come in contact with, but faithful in avoiding, when possible, all that may harm them.

At the risk of being thought to descend to too trifling details, I must just give a hint on

the subject of resisting the influences of *petty annoyances*, which, being of frequent occurrence, and sometimes unavoidable, it would be well to exercise a little self-control regarding their effects. It is not the aged person or the invalid, merely, who has felt depressed and irritated by such things as a continuance of bad weather, an east wind, a cold morning, or, most provoking of all, a bad fire. Now, as we cannot help the first named evils, and as our climate is pretty sure to try us with them very frequently, it were certainly wise to watch against their inward as well as their outward effects; for if our cheerfulness and good humour, our pursuits and pleasures, are thus left at the mercy of an uncertain atmosphere, alas for the boasted happiness of British hearths and homes! Plenty to do, and a diligent spirit with which to do it are the great preventatives of these idle repinings; but we should learn the happy art of "setting traps to catch sunbeams," by resolutely looking at our many comforts and blessings, instead of fretting over discomforts that cannot be remedied, thereby infecting others with our own discontent, or at least making them almost as uncomfortable as ourselves. It is childish, to say the least of it, thus to be influenced by comparative trifles, though

of course, where it is in our power, we ought to surround ourselves and others with cheering influences. Let us, therefore, keep not only bright fires burning on our hearths, but bright hearts and kind words to make these firesides happy.

On Wandering Thoughts.

"I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love."—*Psalm cxix. 113*

"When I detect myself in unprofitable reverie, let me make an instant transition from dreaming to doing."—*Dr Chalmers.*

WE are too much in the habit of considering wandering of the thoughts as an unavoidable and allowable infirmity; and thus, though we regret our inability to control them, we seldom resolutely endeavour to do so, but leave the chance of our thoughts following any subject to depend on their interest in it *for the time*,—much as foolish parents trust to the obedience of spoilt children, *i. e.*, when they *like* to do a thing. Southey somewhere says to the effect, that by regular and proper discipline, our thoughts may be brought into such obedience that they will not only fix themselves when required on any given subject, but do so at regular periods of the day. How this is to be done is not so easily determined; but surely we must all feel that it is desirable. There is a time when every one must have felt this mischievous habit most distressing, namely, in reading the Scriptures, and in prayer; and at such periods how earnestly do

we wish for a cure for what we then consider to be sinful and irreverent. Surely, then do we feel that indulgence in this habit of mind brings its own punishment; for besides the sense of sin left on the conscience, what practical good can we get from either reading or prayer, when the mind is thus wandering, so as to leave no possibility of a deep or serious impression being made? This should be one great argument in favour of a constant and resolute strife against this state of mind, for the benefit of such self-government will not be confined to secular pursuits, but must extend to our most serious studies. What I believe is generally meant by wandering thoughts, is really a difficulty, almost amounting to impossibility, of controlling the thoughts at all. The mind seems like a pathway crowded with passing travellers, and if asked what we are thinking of, we justly answer "*nothing*,"—for no impression is made, no connection between the ideas exists, and, in fact, *we* are not thinking, although wandering thoughts may seem of their own accord to come and go. No direct mental effort appears to do any good; indeed, it is not till we attempt to fix our attention on a book or subject that we become aware of our state of mind. As this is the most common, so it is the

worst form of wandering thoughts, and the one most difficult of cure; much may be done by resistance, but unfortunately this mental condition brings along with it a desire of indulgence, and an indolent sense of amusement that too often plead for its continuance, and we lay down the book, or cast aside the subject demanding thought, because our minds desire to wander, and thus to many this state becomes habitual. To those who are endeavouring to obtain some control over their minds, I would say, never willingly indulge this state of wandering thoughts; it is quite as idle an amusement as sitting at a window watching the passers-by. But do not lay aside the book, or resign the occupation, in hopes of your mind being steadier at some other time; do not betake yourself to some mechanical employment, merely that you may let your thoughts wander at their own free will.

The great cure for this useless frame is, no doubt, to have the mind much occupied with solid and useful knowledge and reflection; for this not only drives away vain thoughts by pre-occupation, but strengthens and disciplines the mind against this wandering habit; but even lesser helps may be found useful,—such as fix-

ing the attention for the time by writing, or learning by heart, or, where practicable, by reading aloud. If while reading the Bible, or in prayer, we thus find our minds are like the fool's eyes, "in the ends of the earth," some assistance is often obtained by thus using the voice, and learning a few verses by heart, or seeking out and writing down parallel passages of Scripture do frequently arrest and fix the thoughts, and help to produce and deepen serious impressions. After such discipline the mind is more easily kept steady.

A second description of wandering thoughts may arise from pre-occupation of mind, and this we sometimes feel to be inevitable. There are, no doubt, times or events which properly exercise such an important influence over us, that no other thought seems admissible; but, at present, I am not alluding to that condition of being during which such frequent and careful thought is a duty. I am referring, rather, to that state generally known as absence of mind. Any one, who watches their own mental feelings, must be aware that this frequently arises from mere want of control, and not altogether from the engrossing nature of any ruling subject of thought. Even when it does so, however, it

were well could we learn to turn our minds at will to other subjects. It is often necessary and desirable to be able to do so, both on our own account and that of others. When we find one subject is apt thus to engross the mind and exclude every other, I think it may be advisable to treat this kind of wandering thought differently from the former. Yield to it sometimes, set yourself to think about it,—if it is painful, look at it resolutely, and see if it can be amended; if pleasant, indulge what is gladsome and grateful; if perplexing, ponder over it, and commit it, by earnest prayer, to Him who alone knoweth the end from the beginning, and *leave it there*, whatever it be that thus engrosses you. But consider, also, if you have *done* all you ought, and let thought lead to action. While thus thinking, endeavour always to see what spiritual benefit you may derive from the circumstances under which you are placed, and how you may act so as to glorify God. Having thus, at proper times, given your mind leave of absence, as it were, resolutely set yourself to some employment that will engage the thoughts as well as the hands, and refuse admittance into your mind of the *predominant* feeling as a forbidden guest, for the time. Unseasonable

thoughts, though good in themselves, are still *wandering thoughts*, and so must be refused admittance.

There is a third description of wandering thoughts which are very fascinating, and which, likewise, have their times when it may be lawful to indulge them. I allude to the suggestions, associations, analogies, or memories, raised up in our mind while reading some work of interest or genius, or while revisiting, after long absence, some once well-known spot. It is delightful to follow out a train of thought thus awakened, or to linger over some old association till the present fades from our view, and we live again among those who are gone, and seem to see once more the scenes we loved so well of old. We should, indeed, beware of strengthening a *habit* of idle reverie, however fascinating; but, surely, there are times when this may be indulged in, and when so doing cannot be considered unprofitable either to the head or heart. I do not, however, include building castles in the air among my permitted reveries. The future *may be* given to us, but the past is still, in one sense, our own; and much that is profitable, as well as pleasing, much that is encouraging, as well as sad or soothing, may be found there

when sought in a proper spirit. It never can be useless for a Christian thus to look back, and consider all the way his God has led him. But I must not forget that I am writing for the young, to whom looking back can seldom be the sad luxury it is to those of mature years; so I will only advert, further, to the class of suggested thoughts, which ought sometimes to be followed out. If they occur during the time devoted to steady reading, or while actually studying a subject, it were better to take a note of them to be thought out afterwards, than to allow them to lead away the mind at the time. You will never travel far along a road if you run into every opening glade you pass, merely to see where it may end. But as it is not always necessary to be thus travelling, so you may occasionally halt, as it were, and study, so to speak, your own mental map, in order to see where the suggested ideas, that we have compared to bye paths, lead,—how they connect one subject with another,—how frequently an idea that seemed at first to belong only to the matter it is made use of to exemplify or enforce, is found to have an extended bearing on other points,—till you know not whether to wonder most at the infinite variety and complex rela-

tions of all knowledge, or at the marvellous simplicity and applicability of general principles.

There is no remedy more effectual for the cure of the first named class of wandering thoughts, than to have the mind well filled with useful knowledge, with something, in short, to think about which is not vain or trifling. And, surely our reflective faculties were given to us for a nobler use than to run to waste and bring forth weeds, which weaken their productive powers and choke the growth of all serious, earnest thought.

Let us remember, then, that it is mentally, as well as morally true, that "as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."

Minor Morals.

"Let all things be done decently, and in order"—*1 Cor. xiv. 40.*

"Decision and propriety in the smaller movements of life is a great constituent of comfort."—*Dr Chalmers.*

IN my early days, young people did not often visit without their parents, or if they did so, it was only in the houses of near relatives. In the one case, they were looked after, and in the other, it was presumed that they would fall into the family routine, and be checked or indulged, as the case might be, with the other young people who were members of the circle whom they visited; but now-a-days there appears to be greater liberty allowed in this respect. Young people seem sooner to consider themselves their own mistresses, and sometimes, when visiting, allow themselves more license than they are permitted at home; and it being now the fashion to treat even young people as "visitors," and not as junior members of a family, no one finds fault with them, or endeavours to exercise any control over them. The consequence is, that in many cases, after

the young guests have departed, complaints are made of them as troublesome inmates, and sometimes the petty annoyances they may have caused are laid unjustly to the blame of their parents, or traced to more serious faults than the mere thoughtlessness which occasioned them. At the risk of being thought a very particular old maid indeed, I would fain warn my young friends of the petty misdeeds that draw down upon them *afterwards* the rebukes I speak of; though they may consider such remarks as childish and trifling, yet surely they will admit that disregard of the comfort and convenience of others is exceedingly wrong, and of that at least they are chargeable when they earn for themselves the character of "troublesome people to have in a house."

One frequent fault with young visitors is thoughtlessness of the servants' labour. They ought to remember that the presence of guests always gives them more to do, and by a due consideration of this, they ought to give as little trouble as possible. But, on the contrary, who has not had visitors who really would seem to require the services of at least one man and maid to answer all their demands? Innumerable notes have to be taken to the post at all

hours,—constant going out and in, and consequent ringing of the door bell, are the order of the day,—perpetual requests are made for some one to assist in dressing them, or in searching for stray articles,—till the weary servants know not when they are to find time to get their regular work accomplished. Indeed, this thoughtlessness regarding servants is not confined to visitors or to the young; and, strange enough, it is frequently met with in those who are not accustomed to a large retinue at home. I recollect hearing of a table-maid who was about to give up her place on account of bad health, but a change in the establishment being contemplated, she agreed to try another term. The family consisted of a gentleman and two sisters, and on his marriage his sisters were to leave him. Six months after, she was asked if she still felt the work too heavy for her, as it was believed she had rather more than less to do. The answer was, that she was quite able for her situation, *now that the bell was so seldom rung.* Before that she had been rung for by the young ladies on the most trifling occasions. Frequently when at her meals, or in the midst of work, she was summoned up two pair of stairs, and then sent still higher for a handkerchief, or

some trifle, to the ladies' bed-room ; and no sooner was she down again, than some equally unimportant matter would cause her to be rung for, till her life, as she said, was spent on the stairs. Yet these ladies were neither unkind nor unable to help themselves ; they were only inconsiderate. All young people at home should, therefore, be trained to a careful consideration of the trouble occasioned to servants, and allowed to give none that is unnecessary, and then we should not so frequently hear the complaint made against them of being thoughtless in this respect when visiting.

Another annoying habit of youthful visitors is their neglect of punctuality in keeping engagements. They are, perhaps, on a visit of a few days at one friend's house, and then they are to go to some one else, who, perhaps, has to make arrangements to receive them. But our young friends are pressed to remain at the first house, and they find it pleasanter to do so (possibly without much pressing), and so they put off the second visit, and sometimes forget to apprise their other friends that they are not coming; or they hurriedly fix another day, and again fail in their engagement. They plead, as an excuse, that they are of no consequence, so

it can make little difference whether they come or not; but they are not always aware of the annoyance this teasing way gives to their friends. Much allowance may be made for unforeseen circumstances that arise to excuse their detention. Sometimes even the plea of their being more amused where they are, is kindly urged; but my young friends should, in general, act upon Hannah More's maxim, "that it is an act of moral turpitude to break any engagement, because something happens to present itself which you like better."

I can sympathize with them too, for I have not yet forgotten the happiness of one of my first visits from home, in a country house full of light-hearted cousins, and the dismay felt when I was summoned thence to pay a visit to an elderly maiden aunt, where the only variety from sewing in a dull bookless room, was a dreary promenade on the beach of a second-rate watering place. I believe I would have evaded the visit; but the other relation in whose house I then was, took the truly kind plan of insisting that such an engagement should be kept, and convinced me *then*, that yielding to one's own wishes in a matter of this kind was real selfishness, to say nothing of its disrespect to

those who had been kind enough to invite me. I do think that if the heads of a house where young people are visiting without their parents, sometimes thus took their place as directors, the young would be much indebted to them. In visiting, the habits and tastes of the family should be as much studied by the guest, as the amusement and pleasure of the guest are studied by the host. Much has been written on the subject of hospitality; but a good deal might be said on the proper reception of it. Every one knows what a pleasure it is to have a visit from one who seems to fall naturally into the ways of the house—whose cheerful, accommodating temper makes everything done to please her, seem the very thing she likes best—who is not too eager for excitement or amusement, can bear to be disappointed in prospective plans, and, capable of finding occupation for herself, never hangs heavy on your hands. My young friends, therefore, should, while visiting, seek to be as much as they can thegivers of pleasure to those with whom they sojourn, as well as the recipients of it. There is yet another source of small annoyances from young guests, which I desire to point out to induce them to avoid it, for like the others I have mentioned, few will tell them to their faces of these

petty faults, and yet will blame them behind their backs; I allude to untidy habits, and ways of doing things. Look at a room where a young lady of this slatternly kind has been at work, and has carelessly left it in its disarray, for the inspection of the next curious visitor. The sofa cover rumpled, the tidiess crushed, her work littering one corner, an open book on the mantelpiece, the music scattered over the piano, her writing or drawing materials left on the table in confusion, and frequently her bonnet and gloves lying where they had been tossed down when she came in from walking, instead of being taken up-stairs. If the lady of the house has to exercise a constant oversight to keep her drawing-room in decent order, what must be the toil and torment of the poor house-maid, or ladies'-maid, who has to look after matters up-stairs. These untidy ones, too, have generally the knack of being always too late. They keep people waiting when about to go out walking; are seldom ready in time for dinner, and never for breakfast; their things are for ever going astray; and the attendance they require is at least equal to the trouble they otherwise inflict. "They need constant *herding*," is a plain but expressive description of such thoughtless ones.

Of course all these faults are equally bad at home, but many, who from the family habits, or from being under the check of parental superintendence, cannot indulge them there, give way when absent from it to thoughtlessness and inconsideration, and thus fall into the bad practices alluded to.

The accusation of perpetual letter writing, is one so generally made against young ladies, that it may seem unnecessary to urge upon them the duty of being good correspondents. I mean, however, principally with regard to writing home, when absent, either on a tour, or shorter visit. Those who are left behind should certainly be thus made to participate in the enjoyments of the more favoured one; for it is selfish and inconsiderate to do as I have known some do,—to write so seldom, so briefly, and at such lengthened intervals, that the relations at home hardly knew where to address their answers, and could give but an imperfect account to inquiring friends of the young traveller's welfare or proceedings. Receiving letters is generally considered a pleasure, so writing them should be regarded as a duty, and where it can be done, they ought to be written with that hearty fulness which exhibits

interest and confers enjoyment. It does not often fall to the lot of the young to have to write irksome letters of business; nor is any want of fluency or dislike of the occupation a general complaint. The neglect of letter writing is too generally caused by forgetfulness, by procrastination, or by indolence; and such being selfish attributes, they ought to be striven against, and writing to and from home be made a regular duty, as well as an agreeable employment. Do not do it grudgingly,—do not fill your letters with excuses for not having written sooner, or with apologies for having no news,—do not cross,—do not write illegibly,—do not put your friends off with a date and a signature, and promise to write more fully next time; but write such a letter as you would like to receive, and in so doing, you will seldom fail to give satisfaction.

When from home, be careful and particular on the subject of small debts. There are few things more annoying than recollecting such things afterwards, except having to pay them for others. Coach hires, postages, a small sum borrowed because you had forgot to bring your purse out with you when walking, trifling commissions executed for you: all these are apt to

be forgotten, and left unpaid, and as they are seldom asked for by those who have accommodated you, it becomes you to be doubly watchful, lest you forget to repay them. "Owe no man anything."

Will it be thought strange if *dress* is alluded to, as among the "things to be thought of" by the young; or is there not quite enough of consideration bestowed on that subject already? I mean, however, by the thoughts on dress I wish to inculcate, something different from what is generally understood or practised in this matter; and perhaps my suggestions may save some from thinking so long, or so incessantly upon it, as they are apt to do. First, then, let me say, that the frequently expressed, though more seldom believed, maxim, that it is of little consequence what we wear, is not true. It is of considerable consequence, and so most people would think if they heard all the inferences and inuendos that are drawn and hinted as to their characters, from their style of dress. Besides the indispensable attention to cleanliness and neatness, there ought to be thought bestowed upon suitability to the station and age of the wearer; there ought to be attention paid to the

goodness of the materials purchased; and there ought to be enough of observation of how others succeed in being *becomingly* dressed, to enable us to do so likewise. Let this expression, "becomingly dressed," be taken in its widest sense, as including the above hints, and not merely as referring to personal appearance, and we cannot go far wrong in our practice. Attention to economy in dress is another of the "things to be thought of" with regard to it, and this is not always to be attained by buying cheap goods. Dresses judiciously selected as to colour and materials, last longer, as well as look better, than "bargains" do; and it is a doubtful point if two cheap dresses last as long as one good one. The love of bargains, however, is not very common to the young. They need guarding rather on the points of squandering money upon superfluities, and of carelessness, or waste of what they already possess. This is a sort of thoughtlessness very contrary to a true, a Christian economy, as to those means given to us as stewards by God, and for which we are accountable to Him. If by a little self-denial as to new purchases, or by a little more care of what we already possess, we can afford to serve others, surely we cannot doubt the duty of do-

ing so, or excuse the selfishness that precludes us from this power.

In the matter of taste in dress, there will be, of course, a diversity of opinion. It seems to come naturally to some persons, and to fly from others all the further, the more they labour after it. Plainness and simplicity are pretty safe rules for attaining it. A quiet and inconspicuous style of dress is generally ladylike. We may take this hint, at least, from the sober body of Friends, although we certainly do not advise or approve of a rigid or entire exclusion of whatever is gay and bright.

I may conclude this subject with a hint to the effect, that we would do well sometimes to consider, in purchasing for ourselves, what use we can afterwards make of our cast-off garments by giving them to others; and to let this consideration lead us to the plain and useful, rather than to the showy and flimsy. It is not at all necessary, in following this hint, that a lady should dress herself like a maid-servant; but those who know how valuable to many of their poor and humble neighbours is the gift of clothing, will gladly, I hope, avail themselves of even such a mode of "looking not only at our own things, but at the things of others," as to

render them not only careful of their garments, but *thoughtful* in the purchase of them.

These hints are intended to apply chiefly to those whose means are not so ample as to place them above the need of "thinking twice" on the subject, and to them may also be addressed a few words on the subject of economy. When first young persons become entitled to the dignity of *an allowance*, be it much or little, they should make it a rule to keep an accurate account of its expenditure, and they must remember that it is not inexhaustible. Some advice, too, should at first be taken as to this expenditure, for I could bring forward a good many laughable instances of the unprofitable investments of first quarter's allowances, that left the young purchasers somewhat at a loss for more essential articles.

Carefully avoid debt, however small the amount. The contrary habit is easily acquired, and it is a ruinous one, not only on account of its immortality, but of its power of deceiving; for the expenses that we pay for soon check themselves, while those which we incur as debt are soon forgotten, or, it may be, are culpably allowed to slip out of our reckoning, when we come to consider how much we are spending, or

how much we have to spare for some other purpose. If you cannot pay for what you need or wish *now*, wait till you can do so before you get it, or do without it for a time. Better, far better, the temporary pain of self-denial, than the sin of wilfully or carelessly incurred debt.

Do not spend money recklessly and profusely upon any object. Do not mistake extravagance for generosity, for they are very different, and indeed incompatible things. Do not think, because you have little to spend, that you can stand in no need of this advice, or that if you pay for what you get, there is no harm done. Remember your stewardship,—your money is no more your own *to spend as you like*, than any of the other talents God has given you; and whether it is a small sum or a large one, it was *not* given to be squandered. Be careful at first, when the command of money is new to you, of indulging yourself in buying *all* you wish, just because you wish it, and can now pay for it. This is a selfish habit to acquire; so do not mis-spend your means on what you do not really need, merely from the love of buying,—and never buy trash because it is cheap. Do not grudge a little thought and trouble to enable you to regulate your expenditure properly, so as to

enable you to give to others, as well as to fulfil your own reasonable desires and requirements. No scheme of expenditure should be considered a right one, if there is no allowance made in it for the claims of charity; and no economy can be allowed any other name than parsimony, which saves from any other motive than to increase the power and privilege of giving more largely to those who need.

Economy, however, may be exercised on other matters than money. It ought to be applied to whatever is valuable; and in this sense of the word, economy of *time* is as necessary to be thought of as economy in money matters. A wise economist of either will not grudge necessary outlay, but neither will she waste or lose the one or other. There is a sauntering way of doing things—a minute trifling in work—that, in reality, wastes as much precious time as more open idleness does; while there is sometimes a careless hurry, or a grudging carefulness in spending such time as perhaps we would prefer to employ on something else, that as effectually defeats the end in view, as if we had omitted the duty altogether.

Among the many and important things that St Paul, in his epistle to the Philippians, desires

them to "think on," are included, "whatsoever things are lovely and of good report;" and on this ground ought not good and pleasing manners to be more thought of, and more practised by the young? It will not do at your age to say, that habit has so fixed your manner that you cannot alter it, and that as it means nothing, you ought not to be blamed for mere manner. *Think* on these things, and you will find, I fear, that faults of manner almost always spring from faults of character or feeling, and can only be cured by attacking them at the source. Ignorance is a frequent cause of a faulty manner in the young. They are apt under its influence to give their opinions too decidedly,—to blame where they cannot see half the reasons or motives at work,—to have a self-satisfied and conceited manner, or an interfering and dictatorial way, that is most disagreeable, and quite opposed to the humility becoming their years.

The forms and modes of egotism are so various and numerous, that they can but be referred to here. Assuredly this habit of mind or fault of manner, is neither lovely nor of good report, but is one of so insidious a nature, and of such frequent occurrence, that I fear it is

often unknown to the person exercising it, or never thought of as a fault at all. We are all ready enough to condemn it in our neighbours, to blame it as springing from self-esteem, from disregard of others, or from petty vanity; but there are egotistical people who are neither selfish nor vain, and perhaps the worst we can say of them is that they are *tiresome*. The fault is more frequent in those with uncultivated minds, than in the educated. It seems almost as if they must necessarily fall into it, if they do not degenerate into gossips about their neighbour's concerns; and this fact is one of the many arguments in favour of cultivating and enriching the mind, not only with solid acquirements, but with accomplishments. It is no sin to be tiresome, certainly, when we cannot help it; but it does so often proceed from narrow-minded ignorance, or loquacious, trifling egotism, or even from an uncultivated imagination, rendering the mind commonplace, that it ought to be guarded against, as far as the means of improving the mind are within our reach.

Self-control, in its higher manifestations, is too important a subject to be brought forward among such fragmentary hints as those with which we are now engaged; but there are minor matters in which it were well that the young

should learn to practise it, both in relation to inward and outward things—to mind as well as to manner. Acting from heedless impulse, giving utterance to sudden and hasty words (no sooner spoken than regretted), and levity of manner, frequently arising from high and uncurbed spirits, often ere long deeply mourned for, are the fruits of a want of that proper self-control, which serves as a check to our first impulsive impressions, as well as a guide in carrying them into effect in a sedate and regulated manner, when ascertained to be well-founded. Self-control in great and in small matters (whether in character or manner) is indeed, a high and difficult attainment; but it is well worthy of being striven for; being the necessary ballast to enable us to “do all things decently, and in order,” as well as to adorn our profession by the graces that are lovely and of good report.

“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, THINK ON THESE THINGS.”
Phil. iv. 8.

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